

## U.S. Strategic Communication Policy Toward the South American Andean Ridge

by

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**U.S. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION POLICY TOWARD THE SOUTH AMERICAN  
ANDEAN RIDGE**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The United States Government and its people have a long relationship with the other Western Hemisphere nations. Over the centuries the strength of bilateral relations and the relations between the U.S. and various regions of the Americas have vacillated. Security issues, economic prosperity, and immigration are among the key aspects of those relationships. The challenge has been for the United States and its partners to clearly and consistently communicate on these matters. At the end of the Cold War, President George H. W. Bush claimed that there was a new world order. The United States has been at the forefront of that new order and occasionally transmitted confusing messages to other nations. This paper outlines U.S. policy concerning Strategic Communication and uses examples from the U.S. interaction with the Andean Ridge countries of South America to show gaps between policy formulation, implementation and the perceptions of regional partners. Finally, it provides recommendations for formalizing Strategic Communication efforts with the Andean Ridge countries.





## U.S. STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION POLICY TOWARD THE SOUTH AMERICAN ANDEAN RIDGE

...the essence of good communication: having the right intent up front and letting our actions speak for themselves. We shouldn't care if people don't like us; that isn't the goal. The goal is credibility. And we earn that over time.

—Admiral Mike Mullen  
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff<sup>1</sup>

The United States Government and its people have a long-standing relationship with the other nations in the Western Hemisphere. Over the centuries, the strength of bilateral relations and relations between the U.S. and various regions of the Americas have vacillated. Security issues, economic prosperity, and immigration are among the key aspects of those relationships. The challenge has been for the United States and its partners to clearly and consistently communicate (transmit and understand) on these matters. At the end of the Cold War, President George H. W. Bush claimed that there was a new world order. The United States has been at the forefront of that new order and occasionally transmitted confusing messages to other nations. This paper outlines U.S. policy concerning Strategic Communication and uses examples from the U.S. interaction with the Andean Ridge countries of South America to show gaps between policy formulation, implementation and the perceptions of regional partners regarding those policies. Though the President has designated the State Department to coordinate Strategic Communication, the process of coordinating and executing Strategic Communication is informal and frequently ineffective.

Although Strategic Communication and Information Operations have existed as concepts to defeat one's enemies since Sun Tzu's time, the United States Government began to formalize Strategic Communication near the beginning of the 21st Century.

The George W. Bush Administration formed the Office of Global Communications in 2003 that withered shortly after establishment. President Bush appointed “Karen P. Hughes, to be Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs in 2005,”<sup>2</sup> who was ineffective in coordinating the U.S. message across the interagency. In April 2007, the Bush Administration established the Counterterrorism Communication Center under the State Department to coordinate interagency words and ideas regarding the Nation’s counterterrorism effort.<sup>3</sup> When the United States Congress became interested in Strategic Communication, the Duncan Hunter National Defense Authorization Act of Fiscal Year 2009 required that the President submit “a report on a comprehensive interagency strategy for public diplomacy and strategic communication.”<sup>4</sup> In his report to Congress, President Barack Obama stated that Strategic Communication is a shared responsibility among senior leaders and in particular Department Heads (Secretaries), and placed responsibility for coordinating Strategic Communication on the National Security Council and specifically on the Interagency Policy Committee for Strategic Communication. President Obama went further in identifying the Department of State “Under Secretary's Office of Policy, Planning, and Resources for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs (R/PPR)...Global Strategic Engagement Center (GSEC) [to] support interagency efforts on global engagement and strategic communication.”<sup>5</sup> In the Department of Defense, the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy was identified as being responsible for advising the Secretary of Defense on Strategic Communication.<sup>6</sup>

The United States military has considered the importance of Strategic Communication for a number of years. At least by 2001, Joint Publication (JP) 1-02,

Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, began defining Strategic Communication. The Joint Chiefs of Staff included a discussion of Strategic Communication related to the doctrine of Strategic Direction and Joint Operation Planning in Joint Publication 5-0, Joint Operation Planning. Consistent with JP 1-02, JP 5-0 defines Strategic Communication (SC) as referring to the:

focused USG efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of USG interests, policies, and objectives through the use of coordinated programs, plans, themes, messages, and products synchronized with and leveraging the actions of all instruments of national power. SC combines actions, words, and images to influence key audiences.<sup>7</sup>

In general, the U.S. Strategic Communication Framework functions satisfactorily but there are instances when it breaks down, leaving the appearance of uncoordinated communication. From outside the United States, American policy formulation is poorly understood. Outsiders perceive U.S. policies from a conspiracy point of view. “[I]n actuality, they are the outcome of compromises and lack of coordination among U.S. bureaucracies that are complicated and contradictory.”<sup>8</sup>

Considering the strategic proximity and strong economic ties between the United States and the other countries in the Western Hemisphere, it is important to consider how the U.S. communicates strategically with its hemispheric neighbors. Although each of the U.S. presidents since 1991 made initial overtures toward the Americas, each found that building relations with Latin America would be elusive due to higher priority domestic issues and problems in other regions of the world. President William J. Clinton had to address the economy, Kosovo, and Somalia.<sup>9</sup> President George W. Bush had to contend with the War on Terror and the economic strain that resulted.

President Obama began his presidency with a global economic crisis and the continuing War on Terror.

Almost concurrent with its independence through the present, the United States has had varying degrees of strategic interests in the countries of the Western Hemisphere. These variations in interests have presented contradictory messages throughout the hemisphere and around the world. During the Cold War, the United States tolerated and often worked with military dictators as a matter of convenience to stem the spread of communism through the Americas. As the Cold War ended, the United States found new threats to its security including narcotics trafficking, military dictators, and economic barriers. The policies associated with these new threats fit within the longstanding U.S. policy toward the hemisphere, in which the United States was concerned with political stability and protection of its economic interests to include access to markets and natural resources while excluding non-hemispheric powers from wielding significant influence in the region. To counter these new threats and to protect its long-term interests, the United States committed foreign aid and military assistance funding toward regional governments. Even if they were unhappy with the rules associated with the United States programs, the political elite accepted U.S. assistance, frequently diverting their own national resources for personal gain or political agendas.<sup>10</sup>

Following the end of the Cold War, the Clinton Administration initiated a series of conferences known as the Summit of the Americas. The first summit took place in December 1994. The participating countries signed a declaration that reflected U.S. policy toward the region that has continued to the present. The signatories affirmed that “representative democracy was:”<sup>11</sup>

the sole political system which guarantees respect for human rights and the rule of law; it safeguards cultural diversity, pluralism, respect for the rights of minorities, and peace within and among nations. ... recognizing the pernicious effects of organized crime and illegal narcotics on our economies, ethical values, public health and the social fabric, we will join the battle against the consumption, production, trafficking and distribution of illegal drugs, as well as against money laundering and illicit trafficking in arms and chemical precursors. ... We condemn terrorism in all its forms, and we will, using all legal means, combat terrorist acts anywhere in the Americas with unity and vigor.<sup>12</sup>

The Clinton Administration established a policy of defending democracy and U.S. interests where it could make a difference. In his strategy to defend U.S. interests, President Clinton believed that the United States needed to have a robust, forward deployed military presence. Then President George W. Bush revised the Clinton policy by stating that the United States was to spread democracy and would defend its interests with preemptive strikes.<sup>13</sup> President Obama backed off the Bush policy of imposing U.S. values upon other nations, taking a position similar to President Clinton.<sup>14</sup>

The United States focuses much of its Strategic Communication toward the beneficiaries of government-to-government assistance. The chief aim of U.S. aid in the Americas has been in stemming the flow of narcotics into the United States. The key recipients of counter narcotics funding have been the countries that comprise the Andean Ridge region of South America. The countries associated with the Andean Ridge are Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. This region is illustrative of how United States policy can be uncoordinated, miscommunicated, and misperceived.

As denoted in the Summit of the Americas declaration, Clinton's counter narcotics policy was an extension of President George H. W. Bush's counter drug strategy. Resulting from the Cold War victory, the military, and in particular, the United

States Southern Command, recognized that funding for traditional security cooperation activities was being reduced. To have relevance in the hemisphere, the command reluctantly moved into the drug war. As the strategy developed through the various U.S. Administrations, the U.S. military took on greater roles in training regional security forces and providing technical assistance and information to regional governments to support counter narcotics activities. This increased military role in counter narcotics melded into Clinton's forward basing strategy and created in the establishment of Forward Operating Locations in Ecuador and Aruba, as well as a strong U.S. military presence in Colombia. In close cooperation with the United States, regional security forces became more successful in eradication and interdiction. In addition to these successes, the illicit narcotics industry moved away from the pressures excised by counter narcotics forces to areas where they could operate with limited government opposition. For example, in the 1990s, the Air Bridge Denial Program in Peru and security force activities pressured coca (the plant from which cocaine is derived) growers to move to Colombia.<sup>15</sup>

The fragmentation of major drug cartels and the Colombian government's inability to govern much of its territory due to an ongoing insurgency presented the opportunity for the various insurgent groups to incorporate narcotics trafficking into their funding streams and eventually into their ideology. As the 21st Century dawned, several U.S. executive branch departments, including the Department of Defense and the Department of State, began to recognize that the Colombian Revolutionary Armed Forces (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia – FARC), the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional – ELN) and the United Auto-Defense

Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia – AUC) were taking control of narcotics trafficking in Colombia. By linking themselves into the narcotics trade, each group obtained vast sums of cash that financed the organizations and were used to purchase weapons, giving each group more firepower than government forces could employ.

Following the September 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, the political and legislative environments in the United States were open to readily accept the observed linkage between narcotics trafficking in Colombia and the terror tactics that the FARC, ELN, and AUC employed. In his April 2002 U.S. Senate testimony, acting U.S. Southern Command Commander, Major General Gary Speers, stated that illegal drugs were weapons of mass destruction against the United States population. He continued that 86% of all terrorist acts against U.S. interests in the year 2000 occurred in Latin American, most of which took place in Colombia. Major General Speers requested that equipment previously donated to Colombia under Plan Colombia, which was restricted to counter narcotics activities, be authorized for use against the FARC, ELN, and AUC. Major General Speers convincingly informed the Senate that the nexus between these terrorist groups and the drug trade was so deep that to share intelligence on narcotics trafficking invariably led to sharing information about one of more of these groups. Over the following six months, other departments echoed the General's testimony, affirming the link between narcotics trafficking and these terrorist organizations, and solidifying the concept of narco-terrorist. Moreover, regional leaders recognizing that this characterization of narcotics traffickers would entitle their

governments to receive aid from the United States included this theme in their dialogs with U.S. officials.<sup>16</sup>

In pursuing relevance and funding, Southern Command, using Department of State information, demonstrated that 19 countries in its Area of Responsibility posed a threat to the United States. For the Andean Ridge countries, these threats included narcotics trafficking. Additionally, Colombia's FARC, ELN, and AUC, and Peru's Shining Path (Sendero Luminoso – SL), Hezbollah in Colombia, and Middle Eastern terrorist cells in Ecuador and Venezuela, raised the Command's concern. Southern Command showed that narcotics trafficking fomented poor governance in affected countries and associated money laundering and other illicit trade could be used to finance terrorist activities. Southern Command secured a portion of the Global War on Terrorism, increasing military activities against these threats.<sup>17</sup>

Beginning in 2002 the United States began to observe growing instability in the Andean Ridge, but policy makers were unable to recognize the root causes. Fusing the war on terror with the war on drugs and neoliberal economic policies contributed to increased poverty and discontent in the region. In his March 2004 testimony to Congress, the SOUTHCOM Commander, General James Hill, described the emerging threat in Latin America as radical populism resulting from frustrations associated with the slow progress of reform promised by democracy. According to General Hill, social and economic inequality were inflaming anti-U.S. sentiment. Though General Hill might have been partially correct, the radical populism was likely a grassroots rejection of inequality, exacerbated by dissatisfaction with local officials' corruption, and disagreement with the conduct of the drug war.<sup>18</sup>



The United States' sincerity toward democracy came into question several times during the 2000s. The U.S. response to the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez's auto-coup in 2002 and U.S. support for Colombian President Alvaro Uribe's questionable 2004 reelection affected the Andean Ridge. In the case of Chavez, the Bush Administration was quick to support the supposed coup plotters only to find that Chavez was back in power. In Colombia, Uribe successfully moved to change the Colombian constitution to allow for his reelection; a move that the U.S. supported. This U.S. reaction contrasted with the condemnation that the Bush Administration issued when Chavez and Evo Morales of Bolivia changed their constitutions and won reelection. This support of democratic process when convenient to the United States has added fuel to the fire of Chavez's and the radical populists' rhetoric.

As a counter to United States criticism of Venezuela, Chavez chose not to support the U.S. policy toward Iraq. Venezuela stated that it supported the counter terrorist effort as long as it abided by international law. Chavez and his Administration were vocal against U.S. policy and apparent hegemonic ambitions toward Latin America for most of President Bush's two terms in office. Venezuela also complained of U.S. domination of the Organization of American States agenda. In 2005, Chavez suspended all military-to-military training with the United States. U.S. policy makers countered the rhetoric, accusing Chavez of providing sanctuary for the FARC; for having supported violent indigenous groups in Bolivia, Peru, and Ecuador; and for ceding his own sovereignty to Cuban operatives.<sup>19</sup>

A United States program on counter terrorism training and a policy concerning protection of Service members from prosecution in the International Criminal Court

(ICC) created pressures for regional militaries to move away from civilian control. In 2002, the U.S. Congress approved the Counter Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP) which was used to train military and police officers. A perceived outcome of the counter terrorism and intelligence training was that the partner nation militaries were expected to collect and share intelligence on their citizens. This outcome ran counter to U.S. policy of the 1990s of separating military and police functions and missions. Also in 2002, Congress approved the American Service Members Protection Act (ASPA) in response to the establishment of the ICC. Perceiving that the ICC was vulnerable to politicization, the U.S. launched a campaign to establish bilateral immunity agreements to protect military members and employees from ICC Human Rights Violation prosecution. Failing to sign an agreement meant that partner nations would suffer military cooperation sanctions. Many Latin American governments considered this type of an agreement as an impingement upon their sovereignty. In 2005, the U.S. Southern Command Commander, General Bantz Craddock told Congress that the ASPA sanctions had the unintended consequence of undercutting the U.S. military-to-military engagements and caused the risk of losing relationships with a generation of military personnel in most Latin American Countries.<sup>20</sup> The ASPA sanctions also sent the wrong message to military leaders; encouraging them to get involved in politics to force acceptance of the bilateral agreement. That is, the sanctions encouraged them to reverse civilian control over their militaries.

Shortly after assuming the Presidency in 2009, Barack Obama attended the Summit of the Americas in Trinidad and Tobago where he promised to engage Latin American countries as equal partners, attempting to shed the arrogant big brother

image that the U.S. had earned over the years. Unfortunately, President Obama faced higher priority issues including the two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, a global economic recession, and domestic problems such as healthcare reform. Latin Americans wondered if President Obama was genuine after viewing his Administration's slow, tepid response to the June 2009 coup in Honduras. Adding to the suspicion was the defense cooperation agreement that the U.S. signed with Colombia. Many regional leaders, including Chavez, worried that the U.S. was planning to set up new military bases in South America. Despite these setbacks and the perception that Obama has not yet instilled real change in the United States policy toward the Americas, the people in Latin America view the U.S. more favorably under Obama than the Bush Administration.<sup>21</sup>

Migration has been a major concern for the Andean Ridge for many years. Lack of progress on immigration reform in the United States coupled with Arizona's law (S.B.1070) requiring the police to check the immigration status of suspected undocumented immigrants have sent confusing messages to the region. The Arizona law drew extensive international criticism leading Ecuador to join other countries in legal battles against the law.<sup>22</sup>

Counter narcotics efforts have been a major focus of relations between the United States and the Andean Ridge Countries. In 2011, drawing from the U.S. 2010 National Drug Control Policy, the United States has a strategy that

...call[s] for a balanced approach of prevention, treatment, law enforcement, interdiction, and international partnerships to achieve a 15-percent reduction in the rate of youth drug use over 5 years, as well as similar reductions in chronic drug use and drug-related consequences such as drug-induced deaths and drugged driving...The 2011 Strategy is a recommitment to the goals, objectives, and activities in the Administration's inaugural Strategy, which set forth the foundation and direction of President Obama's drug policy. ... When we help our partner

nations defeat drug trafficking organizations and curb consumption, we also defend against one of the primary drivers of the growing global security threat posed by transnational organized crime.<sup>23</sup>

Many partner nations see America's drug problem as an issue of supply and demand. If the U.S. were to stop consuming drugs, traffickers would stop providing them. The U.S. dedicates nearly a third of its \$26 billion drug control program to domestic prevention and treatment.<sup>24</sup> American consumption has fallen significantly over the past few years.<sup>25</sup> It is unclear if there is a connection between declining consumption and the U.S. prevention and treatment programs. However, modifying the U.S. counter narcotics policy to increase focus on prevention and treatment and to reduce international assistance due to partner nations such as Colombia taking more responsibility for their own counter narcotics programs, the potential of improving the perception that the Andean Ridge nations have for the U.S. increased.<sup>26</sup>

Regardless, the annual certification of the cooperation that each country lends to the counter narcotics effort will continue to be troublesome for the Andean Ridge countries, in part because the U.S. does not undergo a certification process related to its efforts to curb narcotics consumption and demand. Decertification inhibits a countries access to loans from the International Monetary Fund in addition to restricting eligibility for foreign aid from the United States.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the certification process takes on a political-diplomatic tone. The U.S. State Department delayed Colombia's 2004 certification due to questions on performance and the military's links to paramilitary groups. Nonetheless, just before President Alvaro Uribe visited President Bush in August 2005, the State Department certified Colombia as having met Human Rights conditions with the effort to reduce drug production. Presidents Bush and Obama decertified Bolivia and Venezuela in 2008 but the Presidents considered

support for bilateral programs with both countries as vital to U.S. interests and included waivers for both countries.<sup>28</sup> Had relations been better between these countries and the United States, there is a perception that they would not have been decertified. Despite considering relations with Bolivia to be of vital interest to the U.S., both Administrations suspended Bolivia's tax benefits under the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act.<sup>29</sup>

The relationship between the United States and Venezuela had been relatively stable until Hugo Chavez rose to power in 1999. Chavez was particularly vocal against President George W. Bush and the Bush Administration policies, especially in the conduct of the war on terror. Despite the strong anti-U.S. rhetoric and Chavez's efforts to create a multi-polar world, the two countries have strong economic ties through which Venezuela is dependent on selling petroleum to the U.S. At the beginning of his term, President Obama reached out to Chavez. Temporarily, Chavez's rhetoric against the United States appeared to have toned down. Nevertheless, when President Obama named Larry Palmer to be the U.S. ambassador to Venezuela, Chavez vehemently opposed the nomination because Palmer had stated that Chavez had ties to the FARC and that the Venezuelan military suffered from low morale. The nomination was withdrawn.<sup>30</sup> With this rejection, the U.S. expelled the Venezuelan ambassador and neither country has a sitting ambassador in the other's country. The U.S. has not had an ambassador in Venezuela since 2008 and this is the second time that the United States has expelled the Venezuelan ambassador since 2008.

The United States has had an uneasy relationship with Bolivia's President Evo Morales even before his 2005 election. During the Bolivian elections of 2002, in a clear

reference to Morales, the U.S. Ambassador to La Paz Manuel Rocha warned Bolivians that electing a candidate who would lead the country to become a major cocaine exporter again would put U.S. aid at risk.<sup>31</sup> Though Morales narrowly lost the election, support from his coca producers' union grew. Combined with other disgruntled sectors of Bolivian society, Morales was able to create enough civil unrest for President Gonzalo Sanchez de Losada to resign under duress in September 2003. In June 2005, Morales's pressure forced Sanchez de Losada's Vice President who stepped in as President to resign. Morales won the election in December 2005 with a strong majority of the vote.

Since taking office, the Morales Administration and the U.S. government have had several difficulties. The most complicated times arose in 2008 when Morales expelled U.S. Ambassador Phillip Goldberg for interfering in internal affairs. The State Department stated that the charges were baseless and would have prejudicial implications for both countries and the region.<sup>32</sup> Nearly simultaneously, the U.S. responded by expelling the Bolivian Ambassador to the United States. That same year, Morales expelled the Drug Enforcement Administration from Bolivia.

The relationship between the two countries has improved and in November 2011 Bolivia and the United States signed a framework agreement to base a bilateral relationship on mutual respect and collaboration on issues of mutual concern.<sup>33</sup> The work leading up to and the public announcement of this agreement is an example of patient diplomacy and well-executed strategic communication.

The United States and Ecuador have had some difficulties since President Rafael Vicente Correa Delgado took office in January 2007. The U.S. was concerned

that Correa was aligned with Chavez and was going to adopt the same anti-U.S. rhetoric. The U.S. concern increased when Correa's government approved a new constitution that called for elections in 2009, which Correa won. The new constitution allows for the possibility of Correa's reelection in 2013. The strongest disagreement between the two countries occurred when Correa refused to renew United States access to Forward Operating Location Manta, an Ecuadorian Air Force Base that the U.S. used to launch counter narcotics flights. The agreement expired in 2009. Relations have improved following Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton's 2010 visit to Ecuador. The two governments have recognized that "they cannot let ideology delimit or distort dialogue."<sup>34</sup>

Peru and the United States have enjoyed a positive relationship over the past two decades. The trade relationship between the two countries had been positive and was strengthened when both countries signed a free trade agreement in 2007. Even though there is popular opposition, U.S. support against narcotics traffickers and against the Maoist SL insurgents has been helpful in maintaining the government-to-government relationship. Drug trafficking is on the upswing again in Peru and might be a point of friction.<sup>35</sup> Leading up to the 2011 Peruvian Presidential elections, the U.S. was concerned that a candidate outside the ruling elite, Ollanta Moisés Humala Tasso, might win and take Peruvian-U.S. relations toward the Chavez anti-U.S. bloc. Humala won and Secretary of State Clinton congratulated him on behalf of the U.S. government. The initial impression is that the United States and Peru remain on positive terms with Humala as Peru's President.<sup>36</sup>

Colombia's relationship with the United States is the strongest among Andean Ridge countries. Shortly after taking office in 2010, President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón made adjustments to Colombia's foreign policy, trying to renew relations with its neighbors while maintaining relations with the United States. Colombia's internal problems with the FARC and narcotics trafficking remain on Colombia's international agenda. The institution of a victims' law that could encourage FARC-initiated violence as victims of terrorism and land theft attempt to seek compensation will likely need international support due to the high financial burden associated with implementing the law.<sup>37</sup>

The United States has a set of policies toward the Andean Ridge Countries that focuses on economics and counter narco-terrorism. There are other areas of interest that include immigration, environment, and democracy. The belief in the Andean Ridge that the United States is a hegemonic nation can be substantiated in the perception of how the U.S. communicates its policies toward the region and around the world. As pointed out in the JP-05 definition of Strategic Communication, there are numerous ways to communicate U.S. policy. When the American President delivers key speeches or conducts a State visit, people around the world listen. In his 2009 Summit of the Americas address, President Obama's pledge to treat regional partners as equals encouraged regional leaders to believe that relations with the United States could change and the pledge helped build upward momentum in regional opinions of the U.S. government.

Since taking office, President Obama traveled once to South America in 2011, bypassing the Andean Ridge. He visited Brazil and Chile. President Obama released a



joint press statement with Chilean President Sebastian Pinera in which he emphasized the importance of dealing with “threats such as terrorism, transnational organized crime, drug trafficking, and nuclear proliferation.”<sup>38</sup> They emphasized the role of the international community in dealing with natural disasters. They acknowledged the role of the Organization of American States as a regional forum and the “importance of strengthening the Inter-American Democratic Charter.”<sup>39</sup> Verbally emphasizing the policies was valuable, but the message to the Andean Ridge countries was clear; they did not enjoy the same relationship with the U.S. as Brazil and Chile. However, if one considers that Peru was in an election cycle, the relationship with Colombia is strong and did not require a State visit, and the relationship with the other Andean Ridge countries has been uneasy, Obama did not have a place to visit in the region.

In President Obama’s 2012 State of the Union address, he briefly mentioned the Americas twice. Both points referred to the improving relationship between the United States and the rest of the world.<sup>40</sup> As far as the Andean Ridge is concerned, being left out of this strategic speech could be perceived favorably in that countries named in the recent State of the Union Addresses are often in conflict with the United States. Even so, being omitted could mean another year for Latin America to be on the back burner of U.S. benevolence.

### Conclusion

Other people verbalize U.S. policy concerning the Andean Ridge. Congressional testimony has great influence on how the U.S. is perceived in the region. In October 2011, Ambassador William R. Brownfield, Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs testified that “drug trafficking and other transnational

criminal organizations continue to represent the primary threat to good governance and the rule of law in the region.”<sup>41</sup> The approaches these criminals use and the U.S. response are different than in the 1990s, but they remain a threat.<sup>42</sup> Major General Speers’ 2002 testimony concerning the link between narcotics trafficking and terrorism helped shape the military-to-military relationship within the region both from a legislative perspective as well as from how regional partners lobbied the U.S. government for support. General Hill’s 2004 testimony concerning radical populism helped to solidify the gulf between Chavez and his allies and the United States. General Craddock’s 2005 testimony regarding the loss of contact with a generation of military officers due to the ASPA sanctions expressed the view of many regional partners and helped end a policy that was detrimental to relations with U.S. partners.

Congressional legislation shapes U.S. policy and affects relations between the United States and its partners. Under Senator Patrick Leahy’s (Democrat from Vermont) leadership, beginning in 1998, congress amended the State Department Appropriations Act with vetting requirements to ensure U.S. assistance to foreign militaries is given only to units and people who have not violated human rights.<sup>43</sup> This requirement reinforced U.S. support for human rights. In contrast, the ASPA sanctions undermined U.S. support for human rights by attempting to exempt the U.S. military from international prosecution for potential human rights violations. Though the intent was to protect U.S. military, guaranteeing a fair trial in U.S. courts, the legislation sent a powerful message that international standards did not apply to the United States.

Application of U.S. policy by people such as ambassadors and their subordinates is probably the most potent means to communicate with partner nations on a daily

basis. This is the point where policy is converted into action. Ambassador Rocha's 2002 comments helped precipitate Bolivia into a chaotic state that toppled two Presidents and gave rise to Evo Morales and the frictions between his Administration and the United States. The steady engagements that U.S. officials execute to negotiate treaties such as Free Trade Agreements and Defense Cooperation Agreements and less formal agreements such as military-to-military cooperation move bilateral and regional agendas forward at a barely perceivable pace. They usually do not make the news headlines and typically cause little to no friction when consistent with National policy.

Effective Strategic Communication requires that all levels of contact with regional partners carry a consistent message. It is not enough to publicize that a United States National Value is respect for Human Rights or support for Democracy when the practice of National Policy demonstrates that these values are violable. Even if a Presidential Administration were successful in coordinating and synchronizing its Strategic Communication, the Legislative Branch can independently, and often inadvertently, disrupt the Administration's message. The United States Government would benefit from a formal process through which it could develop and coordinate its messages toward international and domestic audiences. To be effective, this process would need to be streamlined and would have to include the executive and legislative branches.

In coordination with the President, Congress could enact legislation that would require the executive branch to formally coordinate its Strategic Communication. An Executive Branch Reorganization Act that expanded the National Security Council's authority to oblige interagency coordination could increase the probability that the

different departments of the Administration would work toward the same objectives in concert. Congress should include itself in the coordination process. That is, if Congress intended to write legislation such as the ASPA sanctions, the senior members of the U.S. government would have the opportunity to discuss the planned law to highlight the positive and negative consequences that could arise if enacted. Neither the Executive nor the Legislative branch would be constrained in the process, but both would be better informed and better able to communicate National intent prior to implementing policy. This type of government reorganization would enable the whole government to act as one body, similar to the advantage that the U.S. Military gained from the 1986 Goldwater Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act. In addition to improving Strategic Communication, this type of reorganization has the potential to foster more efficient, holistic government operations as the United States pursues its national interests.

The ancient Chinese strategist, Sun Tzu, understood that coordinating and wielding a government's power in pursuit of national interests can yield victory without entering into combat when he stated, "For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill."<sup>44</sup> Proper employment of Strategic Communication as defined by the United States government is the acme of skill for national security professionals.

## Endnotes

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<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-14.

<sup>4</sup> U.S. President Barack Obama, “National Framework for Strategic Communication”, (The White House, 16 March 2010), 8. The Federation of American Scientists internet file <http://www.fas.org/man/eprint/pubdip.pdf>, (Accessed 22 Oct 2011).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operation Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 11 August 2011), II-9.

<sup>8</sup> The Carter Center, *Toward a Common Agenda for the Andean Countries and the United States. Andean-U.S. Dialogue Forum* (February 2011).  
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<sup>10</sup> Brian Loveman, ed., *Addicted to Failure: U.S. Security Policy in Latin America and the Andean Region* (Lanham, Maryland, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), xi-xii.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., xx-xxi and 2.

<sup>12</sup> Summit of the Americas web site, “First Summit of the Americas: Declaration of Principles, 9-11 December 1994”, [http://www.summit-americas.org/i\\_summit/i\\_summit\\_dec\\_en.pdf](http://www.summit-americas.org/i_summit/i_summit_dec_en.pdf) (Accessed 24 January 2012)

<sup>13</sup> Loveman, *Addicted to Failure: U.S. Security Policy in Latin America and the Andean Region*, 2-4.

<sup>14</sup> The Carter Center, “Toward a Common Agenda for the Andean Countries and the United States. Andean-U.S. Dialogue Forum (February 2011)”.  
[http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace\\_publications/americas/andean-common-agenda-en.pdf](http://www.cartercenter.org/resources/pdfs/news/peace_publications/americas/andean-common-agenda-en.pdf) (Accessed 17 December 2011), 30.

<sup>15</sup> Loveman, *Addicted to Failure: U.S. Security Policy in Latin America and the Andean Region*, 4-17.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 4-23.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 32-36.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 40 and 48-49.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 41-44.

<sup>21</sup> The Carter Center, “Toward a Common Agenda for the Andean Countries and the United States. Andean-U.S. Dialogue Forum (February 2011)”, 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>23</sup> Executive Office of the President of the United States, "National Drug Control Policy", 2011, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/ndcs2011.pdf> (Accessed 12 November 2011), 6, 7, 71, 79.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, "World Drug Report 2010", [http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR\\_2010/World\\_Drug\\_Report\\_2010\\_lo-res.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/World_Drug_Report_2010_lo-res.pdf) (Accessed 12 November 2011), 4.

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<sup>31</sup> Roger Burbach, "Treating Bolivia as a Sovereign Partner", (North American Congress on Latin America Report on the Americas 42, number 1, January/February 2009), 33.

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<sup>34</sup> The Carter Center, "Toward a Common Agenda for the Andean Countries and the United States. Andean-U.S. Dialogue Forum (February 2011)", 23-24.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>36</sup> Fox News Latino, "Estados Unidos está "optimista" ante la presidencia de Humala en Perú", 30 June 2011, <http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2011/06/30/estados-unidos-esta-optimista-ante-la-presidencia-de-humala-en-peru/> (Accessed 28 January 2012).

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